



TRADITIONAL ORCHARD SURVEY

mapping england's orchards





traditional orchards history & heritage



Traditional orchards are a much loved part of our British heritage and countryside.

Providing local communities with delicious fruit and peaceful places to enjoy, traditional orchards can be recognised by the presence of full-sized (standard) fruit trees which may be centuries old.

Through the careful planting and cultivation of a great range of fruit varieties, traditional orchards are a source of pride and have significant cultural value, holding clues to our past culinary tastes.

Traditional orchards are cultivated using low-intensity methods such as the absence of pesticides and fertilisers, and the use of grazing animals instead of machines for mowing. The combination of old trees and natural management provides an invaluable refuge for wildlife.

Fruits can provide important food sources in autumn and winter for wildlife and spring blossom is not

only beautiful to see but an important nectar source for invertebrates. Rare plants, lichens and small mammals flourish. Birds and insects find food and shelter amongst the decaying wood of old trees.

Once a common sight within the landscape, the traditional orchard habitat is now under serious threat and this is the reason the UK Biodiversity Action Plan now includes traditional orchards in its list of priority habitats. Threats to old orchards include neglect, intensification of agriculture and pressure from land development. Supermarkets have long been importing cheap fruit from overseas which has led to orchard habitats becoming economically unviable and increasingly rare.

core facts

- historically we have grown more than 2,000 varieties of cooking & eating apple in Britain
- orchards in England have declined by more than 60% in the last 50 years

mapping england's orchards

The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) is co-ordinating a project to map the traditional orchards of England. Orchards are hotspots for biodiversity and support a wide range of wildlife including many species which are nationally rare or scarce, including the noble chafer beetle. Knowing where orchards are is essential for the conservation of this important habitat and the vast array of species that are associated with it.

The aim of this project is to create an inventory of traditional orchards in England which will support the Habitat Action Plan and form a baseline from which to guide all future conservation work.

PTES is calling on hundreds of volunteers to help both locate and survey these orchards. A typical orchard survey will record the species, number and condition of the fruit trees. This can be carried out at any time of year.

A completed inventory of this priority habitat will facilitate the monitoring of any further losses and will be one step towards protecting this icon of the English countryside.

The inventory is published on the internet and is available to download at www.naturalengland.org.uk or to view at www.magic.gov.uk.



how can you get involved?

We need the help of local volunteers and land owners, orchard groups, wildlife trusts, parish councils and agricultural colleges.

1. Do you own, manage or know of an orchard that should be included within the traditional orchard inventory ?



2. Do you have time to spare to help survey traditional orchards in your local area? No experience necessary, maps and guidance will be provided.

To get involved please call 020 7498 4533 or email anita@ptes.org www.ptes.org/orchards

thank you



the noble chafer

The noble chafer beetle is one of our rarest beetles. Dependent on dead and decaying wood and restricted almost entirely to traditional orchards, their habitat is fast becoming scarce.

The species is confined to Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire and parts of the New Forest and Oxfordshire. Excitingly a population has recently been discovered in Kent. Historically the species was also known to exist in Essex, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Devon and Cumbria.

The handsome adult beetles are a striking iridescent green. They only survive for about four to six weeks and are most likely to be seen flying around or visiting flowers such as hogweed on hot, sunny days in July and August.

During this time, adult beetles will mate and the females will lay their eggs in the decaying wood of old fruit trees. The larvae, which feed on the rotting wood, then take two years to develop into adults.

They exhibit a preference for orchards that contain mature fruit trees between 50 and 80 years old. These sites are very vulnerable to removal or clearance, particularly if the trees are reaching the end of their productive life.

The traditional orchard inventory will help to identify important sites for the noble chafer that can be managed or restored to safeguard the species' future.

Images: Andrew Curran, Matt Smith, Keith Alexander, Harry Green, PTES



people's trust for
**endangered
species**



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